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SUBJECT: CHAD'S ELECTORAL REFORM COMMITTEE LAMENTS "LACK OF  
POLITICAL WILL"

REF: A. NDJAMENA 89  
[B](#). NDJAMENA 139  
[C](#). NDJAMENA 147

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dissemination.

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) In several recent meetings with Embassy officers  
and TDY visitors, members of the Chadian Electoral Reform  
Committee (ERC) have complained that lack of political will  
continues to plague preparations for 2010-11 elections in  
Chad. Lol Mahamat Choua, opposition figure and current  
President of the Committee, told Acting AF/C director Siria  
Lopez May 4 that the entire Committee -- both government and  
opposition reps -- was in agreement with conclusions  
presented the previous week by visiting jurists from the  
Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, to the effect  
that the GoC could overcome technical difficulties having to  
do with electoral law simply by issuing a clarifying decree.  
According to Choua, the GoC needed international  
encouragement if it were to be expected to implement the  
recommendations of the international jurists. Choua himself  
spent more time outlining obstacles to holding elections as  
scheduled than he did offering willingness to take concrete  
actions to move the process forward. END SUMMARY.

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ADVICE FROM FRANCOPHONIE  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Following meetings in March (Ref A) involving  
visiting French FM Bernard Kouchner, who admonished Chad's  
Electoral Reform Committee to move forward with planning  
credible national elections as envisioned in the August 13,  
2007 Accord (Ref B), the International Francophone  
Organization (OIF) dispatched two legal experts to Chad to  
help end disagreements over electoral law that have long  
divided portions of the Chadian body politic. The two  
experts, one from France and the other from Benin, presented  
their conclusions April 30 in a session before the Electoral  
Reform Commission that the U.S. attended (along with others  
from the diplomatic corps) as an observer.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The jurists addressed questions on which  
differences have emerged between the GoC and members of

Chad's National Assembly, in part because some provisions in the Chadian Constitution seem inconsistent with subsequent laws and regulatory measures (among them the August 13 Accord), and in part because the respective competencies of the GoC, National Assembly and CENI (Comite Electoral Nationale Independente) are not clearly spelled out in Chadian law. Among the questions addressed by the international jurists were how to facilitate voting by nomads but not encourage them to vote multiple times, how to define appropriate population thresholds for additional legislative seats, and whether to insist that sitting members of the National Assembly retain party affiliation (the "fidelity clause" in the August 13 Accord.)

14. (SBU) The jurists concluded that based on precedent set in legal traditions in various French-speaking states, most current election-related disagreements in Chad could be resolved if the GoC were simply to issue a decree laying out linkages between the various instruments with a bearing on the upcoming electoral process here. (Embassy has obtained a copy of the experts' draft "projet de decret" and has provided it to Washington.) Electoral Reform Committee Chairman Lol Mahamat Choua thanked the jurists for their efforts but intimated that since they had examined relevant electoral law in some French-speaking states, they should continue their research to determine what law in all such states might say. Members of the diplomatic community criticized Choua for not taking the recommendations of the experts and urging their implementation immediately.

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FOOT-DRAGGING  
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15. (SBU) Visiting AF/C Acting Director Siria Lopez, who met with Choua May 4, made clear that following progress on Chad-Sudan relations (Ref C), international attention would shift to Chad's ability to proceed with democratization, including through elections in 2010-2011. Choua indicated that although the entire Committee was in agreement with the conclusions of the OIF experts, there was "lack of political will" on the part of the government to follow through on their recommendations. Choua added that the USG and other international players should press the GoC to take action and issue the draft decree ("projet de decret") prepared by the jurists if early action was desired.

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ELECTORAL REFORM PROCESS  
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16. (SBU) Some progress is being made on electoral prerequisites, including preliminary work for the national demographic census, a multidonor effort toward which the USG is contributing. Having recently completed the mapping exercise and most of the training for census agents, Chad's Census Bureau will proceed with the actual census during the two-week period of May 20 to June 4. As the rainy season intensifies in the weeks afterward, making movement within Chad problematic, the electoral census -- i.e., voter registration -- will only begin after the dry season begins, presumably in September. Both the demographic and electoral censuses are among the electoral prerequisites on which the government and opposition have agreed.

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COMMENT  
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17. (SUB) Choua and his colleagues spent more time outlining obstacles to elections than offering proof of willingness to move the process forward. With respect to the projet de decret, which is an obvious tool for jump-starting efforts to resolve long-standing technical disputes, the members of the

Committee seemed more inclined to rely on outside assistance than on an effort from within. Embassy has long been of the view that the opposition and GoC alike are content enough with the status quo -- salaries for National Assembly members, for Committee members, etc., so long as there is no movement toward elections -- that holding the vote as scheduled could be quite a slog, despite progress on the census.

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